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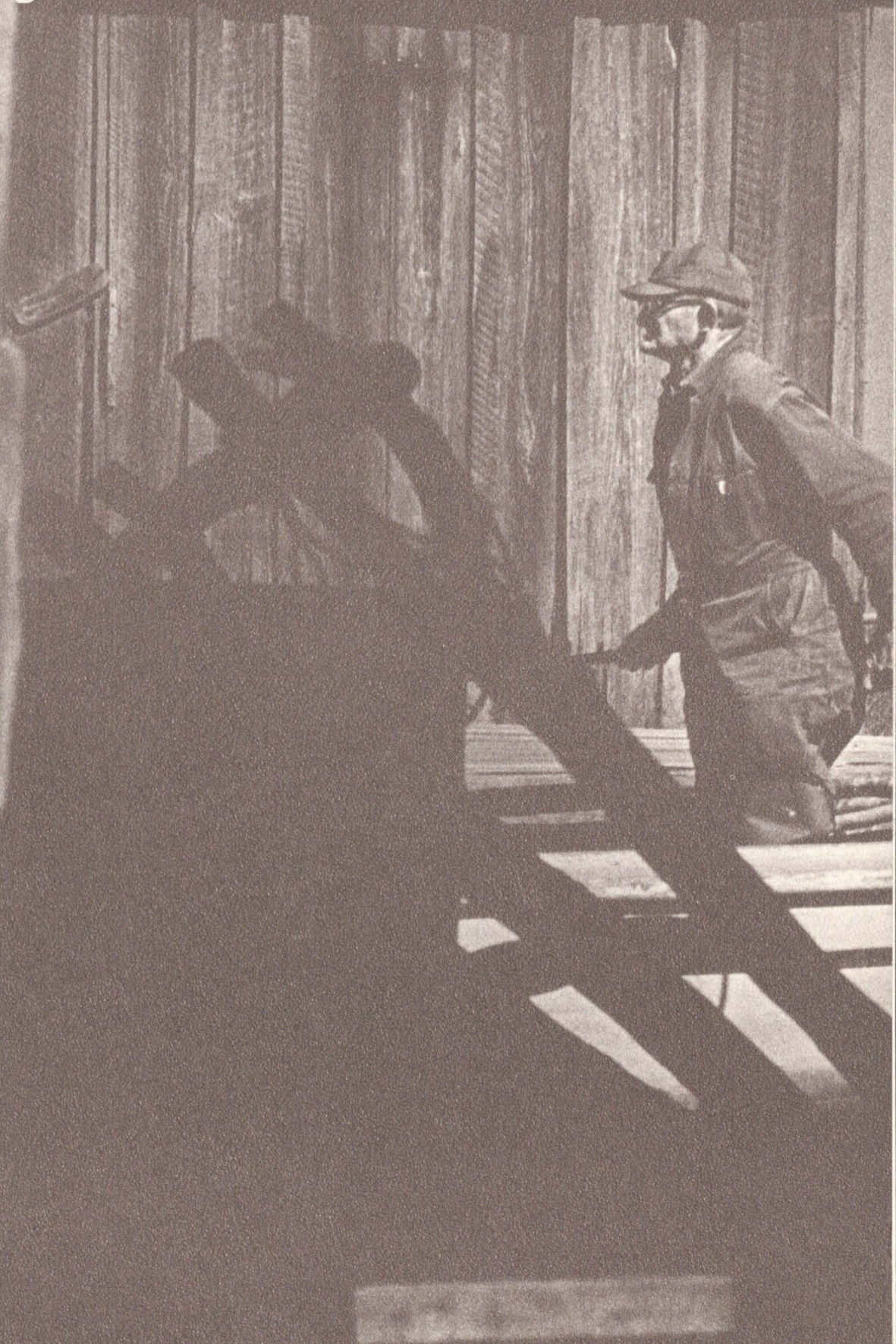
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NEXUS

the literary magazine

35 cents



NEXUS

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Editor
Managing Editor
Art Editor
Advisor
Staff

*Mark Wehrstein
Stuart Ehrlich
Dan Patterson
Gary Pacernick
Lyn Moore*

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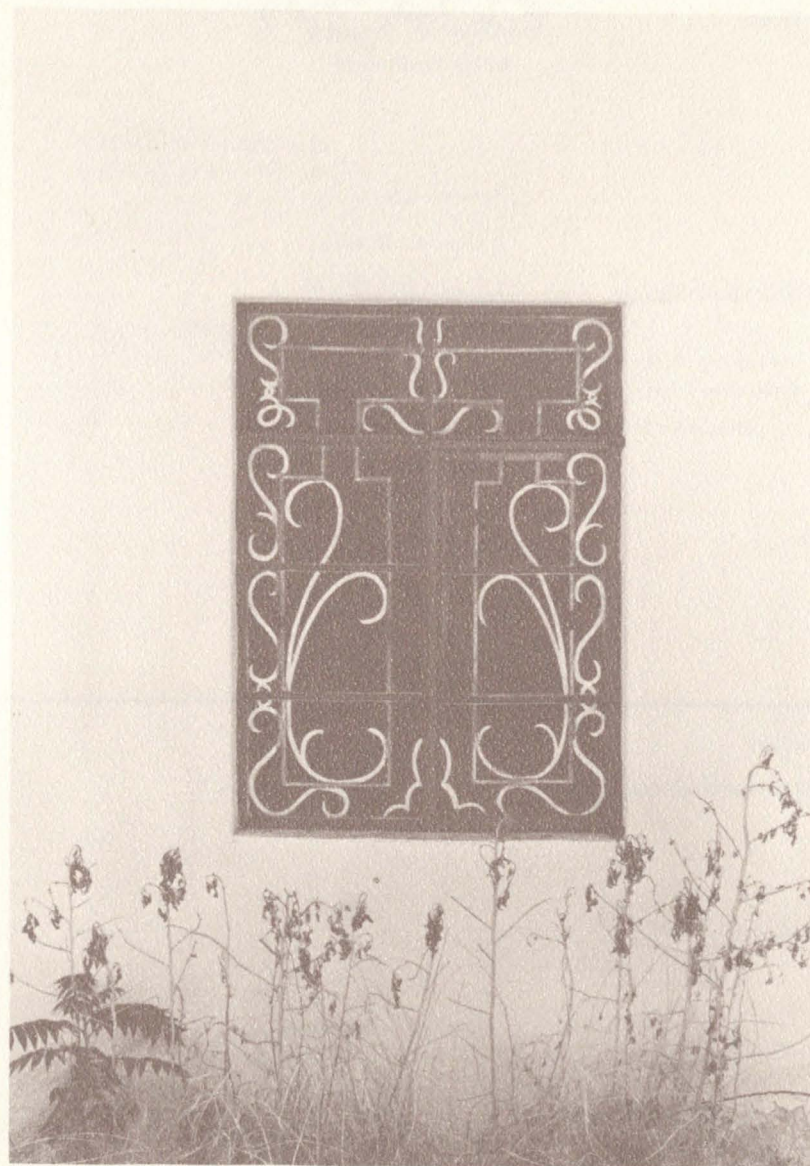
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QUEEN ANN'S LACE

Robert D. Conger

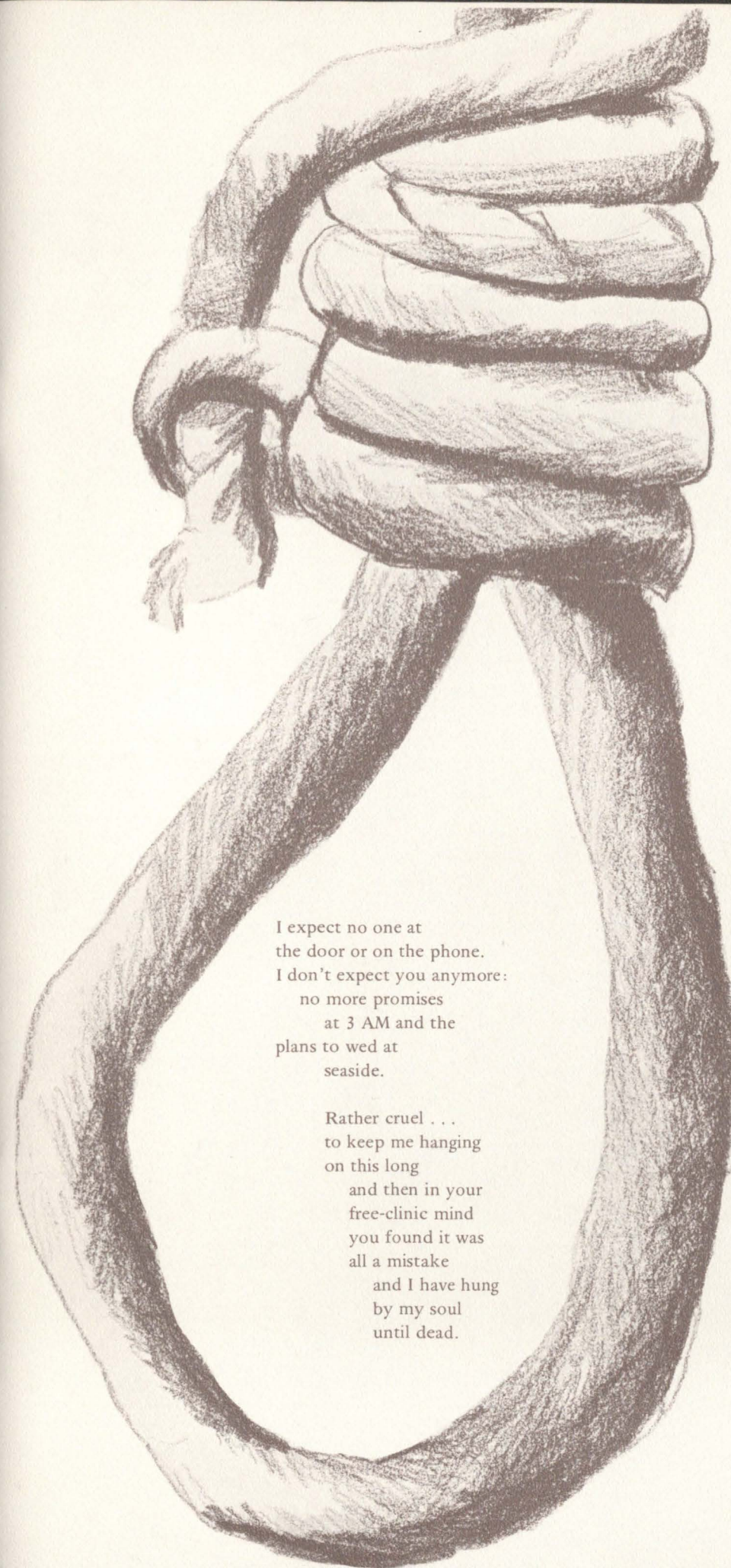
Queen Anne's Lace, those ghostly, lacy discs,
Float amid the green and catch spring's light.
Like stemless flower-clouds, toward night,
They fade and sway, appear and disappear, as if they risk
Oblivion in diffuse and swimming air,
As if, in fact, they were not really there.

They shoot up from corn-stubbed fields,
Exploding in a soft, a pinwheeled celebration
And later, among goldenrod, make incantation
Of the white to which our summer yields,
And of our sense of passing hours,
And of our state, our towering, our gutted towers.

Before the last have bloomed, the first condense
Into a nut-brown, crumbling cup of seed
Where black and busy beetles feed
In fertile desiccation. And at the spring's expense
The herb collectors gather these for free
To brew a gentle, sweet, and bitter tea.

No
One
To
Cut
The
Body
Down
J.R. Alley

I expect no one at
the door or on the phone.
I don't expect you anymore:
no more promises
at 3 AM and the
plans to wed at
seaside.
Rather cruel . . .
to keep me hanging
on this long
and then in your
free-clinic mind
you found it was
all a mistake
and I have hung
by my soul
until dead.



I expect no one at
the door or on the phone.
I don't expect you anymore:
no more promises
at 3 AM and the
plans to wed at
seaside.

Rather cruel . . .
to keep me hanging
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by my soul
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No
One
To
Cut
The
Body
Down
J.R. Alley

TWO

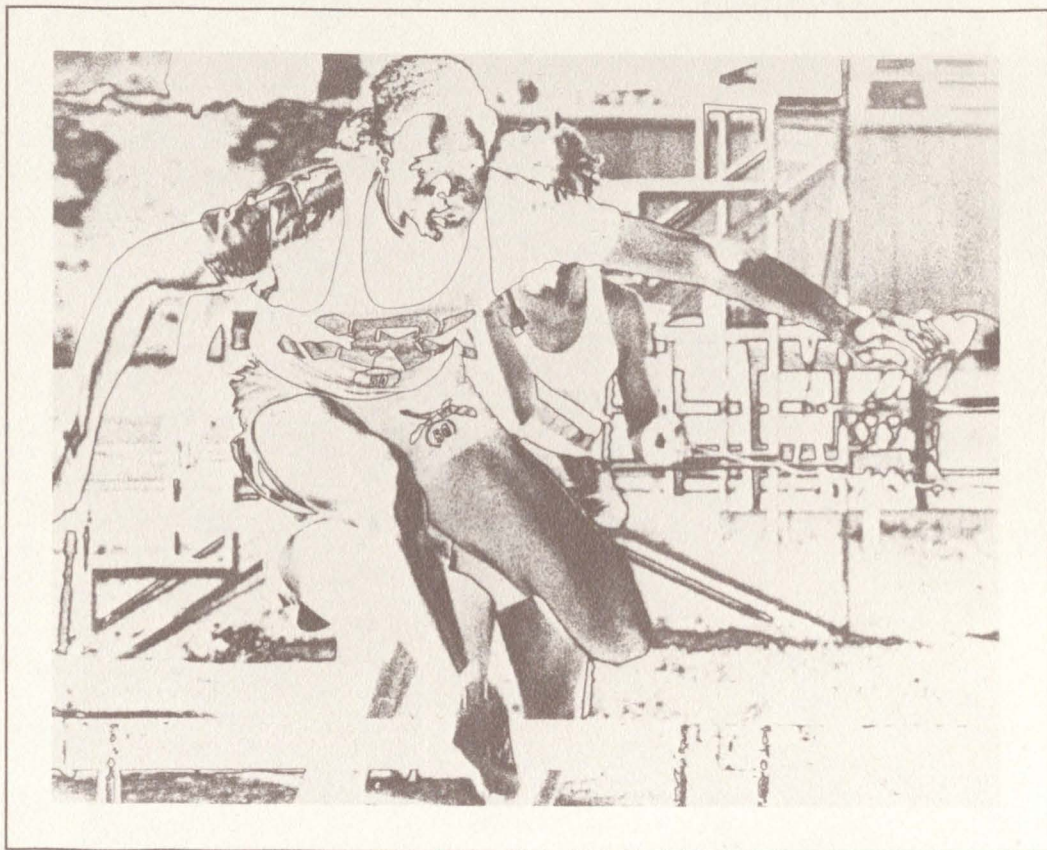
Quiet minutes, pushing, moving
Around and around, sweeping,
Staring at my face
Making the air tremble in the dark
In the dark of the night
In the lonely dark night
In the spinning, silent, continuous course
Of deafening time in the empty night

A warm honey voice, soothing, smoothing
Over and over in soft replay
Coating the savage tembling dark
Calming the sharp savage edges
Melting the fear of the lonely dark night
Not words, but honey drippings
Out of the quiet
The dearening quiet
from the soft supple mouth of the night.

And now a touch, moving, smoothing
In and under the voice and the quiet
Quivering the air and the trembling tears
Blunting the edges of the dark lonely night
Warming and glowing and polishing and nudging
Moving the night mouth, the soft replay
In the steaming, singing, blubbling, ringing
Air of the lovely night.

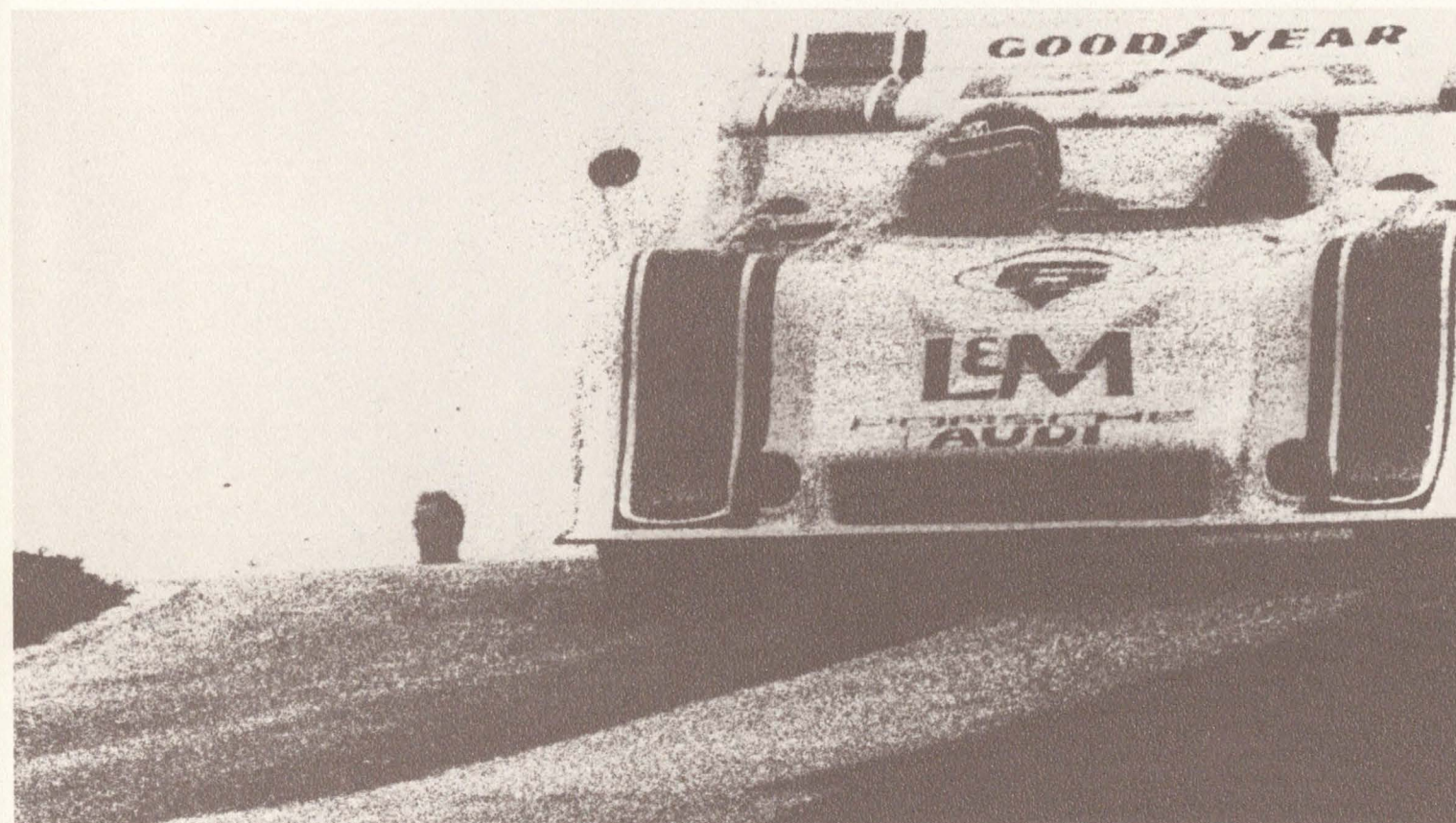
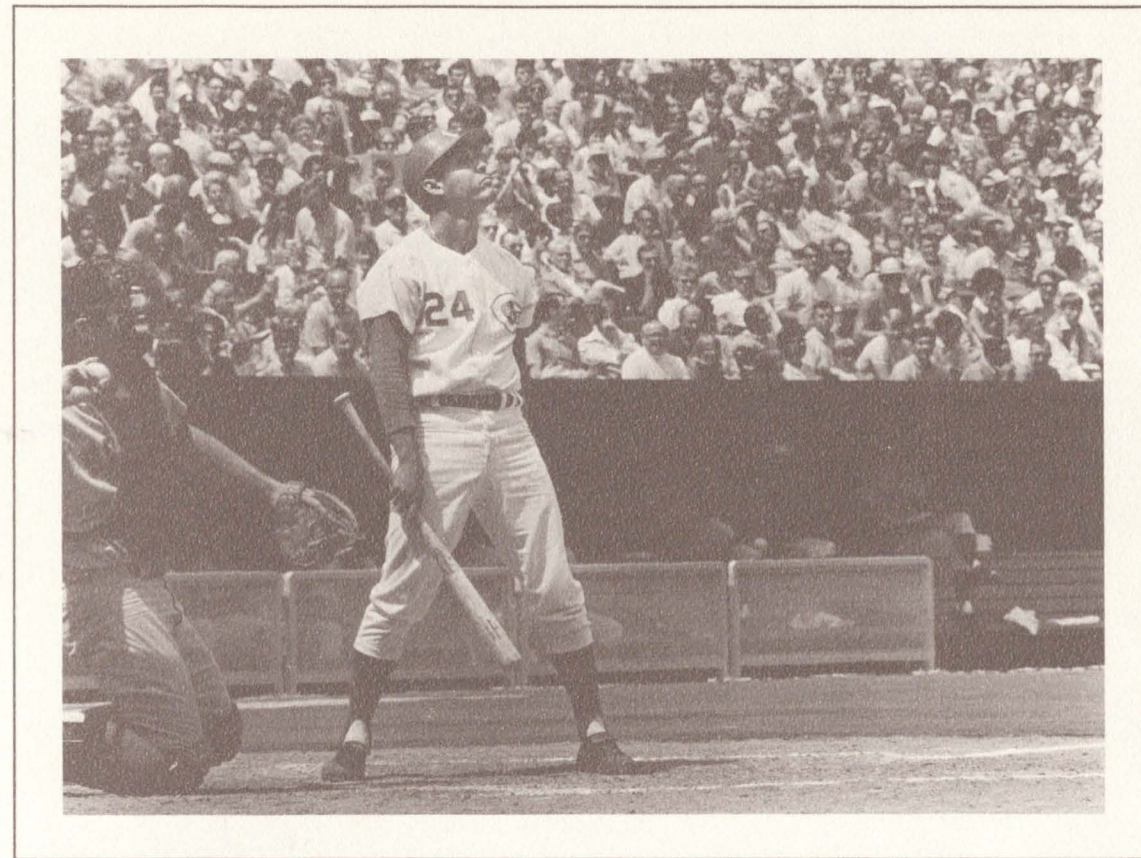
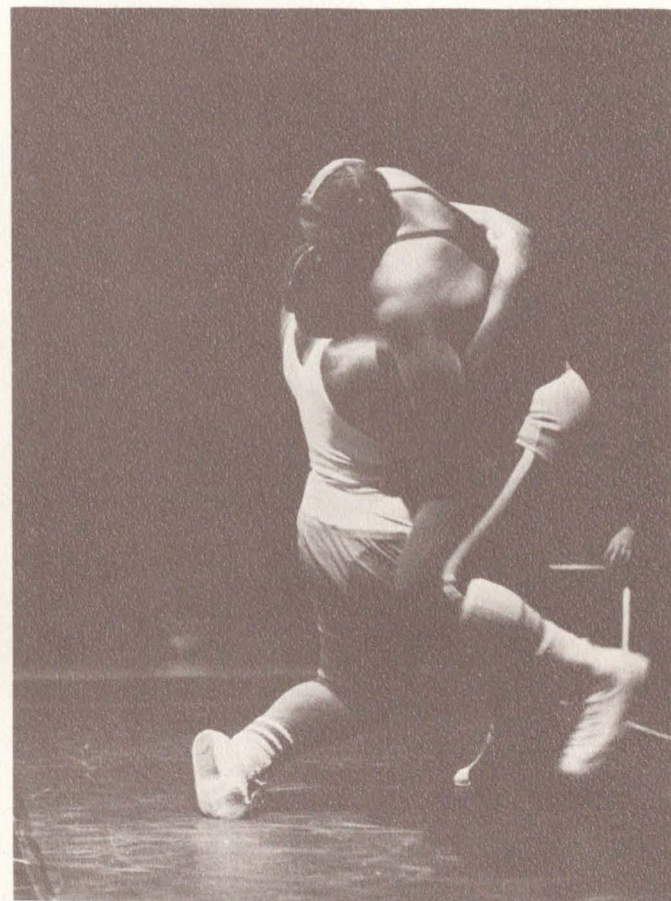
Molly
Bordonaro

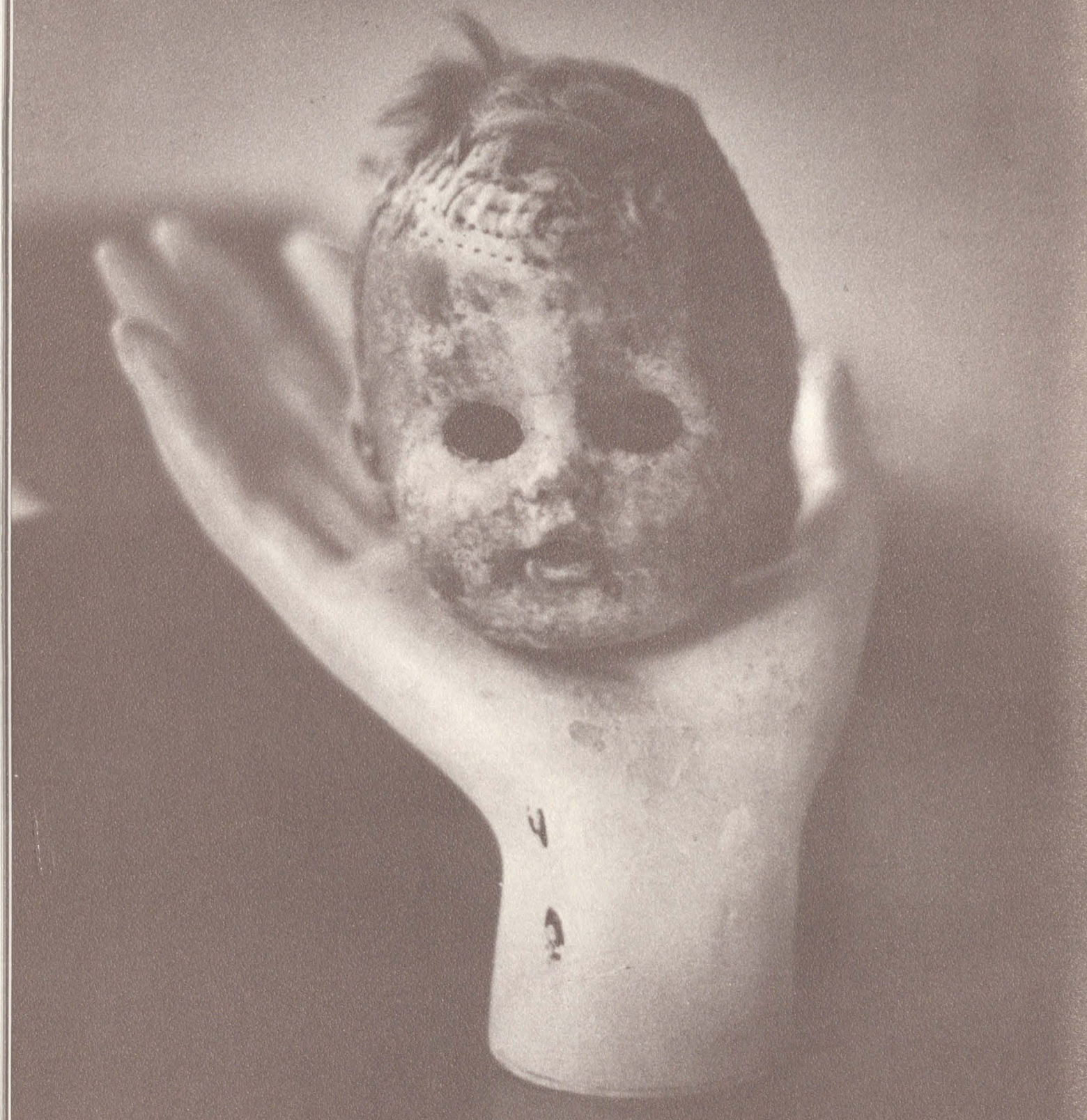




GALLERY

Dan
Patterson





Decisions, Decisions: Paris or Rome, a Porsche or a Mercedes, ITT or IBM, sell or hold, filet or lobster, swimming pool or cabin cruiser, the dark-haired exec, or the tall blonde swimmer with the body, hash or stew, dust or vacuum? Decisions, decisions: life is so full of them, and what a bore it would all be without them.

Let's see—I think that last Friday I vacuumed first and dusted last, and shoved the dirt from right to left around the rooms. And I fixed beef stew for supper. So today, for a change, I believe I'll dust first and vacuum last, left to right. And for supper, I'll cook hamburger hash. Oh, Martha Ludington, you exciting woman you, you are a never-ending bundle of surprises!

And today for lunch I could even have a cheese sandwich instead of peanut butter and jelly. And I know—this morning I think I'll reverse the order of the stack of records on the stereo. Wouldn't that be fun?

See, Martha, isn't dusting dusty tables fascinating? Watch the dust move, Martha. It moves wherever you move the red-and-white rag that used to be a red-and-white T-shirt, Martha. The dust is under your spell, Martha. Why, you could probably control the whole world—order the universe!

And now, you wicked filthy carpets, it is your turn to suffer at the hands of the mighty Martha and her violent vacuum sweeper. Dirt—dust—get out of my way! Beware—today I sweep from left to right, and catch you all off guard!

If I clean fast enough, I may even have time left over to bake a cake for dessert. I always bake chocolate cakes—today I think I'll surprise everyone and bake an angel food instead. With mountains of white icing.

"Oh, goody, goody—cake! I smell cake! Can I peek? Yuck! It's not chocolate! OOOOOooooooo! I hate angel food. Why didn't you make chocolate cake, Mom?" Randy was home from school, and making his presence known.

"I just thought I'd surprise you with something different. Guess I wasted my time. Did you have a good day at school today, Randy? How did you do on that math test?"

"Not so great. Think I got about an 80. Maybe. I don't understand this stuff we're learning now, Mom. Can you help me with it now? The teacher said you should."

"Aren't these teachers nowadays simply wonderful? They think mothers have nothing else to do but work arithmetic problems and ask spelling words. I should get paid for being a private tutor. At least then I might have enough money to buy myself a new coat. I'm just too busy right now, Randy. Where's Lucinda? Why is she so late getting home from school?"

"Gosh, Mom, don't get so upset. She's only five minutes late. She probably stopped off at that creep's house."

"Who's that creep?"

"Who else—Beth Ann."

"Thank heavens, here she comes now. . . . Lucinda—where have you been? I've been so worried about you."

"Why are you so worried about me every day? I always come home, don't I?"

"Because she likes to worry. Gives her something to do,"

THE DOLL HOUSE

barbara
heinen

interjected Randy.

"Yummy, yummy! I smell cake. Can I have a piece? Oh—ick! What kind of cake is that? It's not chocolate!" Lucinda was full of praise for her mother, also.

"It's angel food cake. I made it to surprise you. You may have a piece after you change your clothes."

"I don't want any. It looks icky."

"OK."

"Mommy—will you play doll house with me after I change my clothes? Beth Ann has to go over to her grandma's today, and she can't play."

"Oh, Lucinda, you know I don't have time to play things like doll house. I have so much work to do. Maybe Randy will play with you for a while."

Randy always became visibly upset over this suggestion. "You've gotta be kidding!" he yelled. Randy had played doll house one rainy day with Lucinda when he had felt sorry for her. He had lied about it later to his friends, and had lived in mortal fear ever since that they might one day find out what he had been doing that Saturday morning. He had told his friends that his Mom had made him clean the attic. Which was just a tiny bit true. The doll house *was* in the attic.

The doll house had occupied the place of honor in the attic playroom and in Lucinda's life since her seventh birthday, two years ago, when Grandpa Morley had presented her with The Grandest Doll House In All The World. Grandpa had devoted the five years after his retirement to building this labor of love for his favorite granddaughter, little Lucinda of the freckled nose, the bouncing red pony tails, and the happy dark eyes. The only thing in the world that Lucinda loved more than her beautiful doll house was her thin and aging grandfather who had made it all for her.

Today, as every day, Lucinda would play up in the attic, the old attic with its secret closets, its hidden doorways, broken mirrors, and trunks full of old-fashioned clothes. But Lucinda would play only with her grand doll house and its tiny furniture and its tiny people, the Poeppelmeiers. She would have to play alone, as Beth Ann had gone to her grandmother's, and Randy had to shoot baskets, and Mom was too busy.

Mom was always too busy. Lucinda knew that if she could just once get her mother to play with the Poeppelmeiers and their tiny tables and tiny sweeper and tiny pans, she would love it as Lucinda loved it, and would return every day to play. But Mom was always too busy.

So Lucinda went to the attic, and Randy went over to

Jeff's house to shoot baskets, and Martha could at last return to her cooking and her cleaning.

Jack Ludington startled Martha by arriving home for dinner about six-thirty. He hadn't been home for dinner any evening that week, so Martha saw no reason to expect him this evening any more than any other evening. But there he was.

"Isn't dinner ready? Christ, I have an eight o'clock appointment. Can't you hurry it up a bit?"

"I'll get it on as quickly as I can, Jack. I've been so busy today. I even baked a big tall angel food cake for you."

"Angel food cake? Why in the hell would you bake an angel food cake? If there's anything in the world I hate, it's angel food cake And hamburger hash—do we ever have anything but hamburger hash?"

"I thought it had been a long time since we'd had it."

"Well, you thought wrong. And this goddamned kitchen—couldn't you clean once in awhile? The whole goddamned kitchen looks like hamburger hash! Where are those brats? Couldn't they be here for dinner on time just once? They're going to start obeying a few rules around here from now on."

Martha called Lucinda and Randy, who bounded into the kitchen with shrill screams and dirty hands.

Jack responded to their appearance with a torrent of verbal outpourings quite a few decibels above normal range. "Can't you teach your goddamned kids some manners? Christ, look at the scum on their hands and clothes. Don't sit on that chair in those filthy pants! Shut up! Pick up that paper you dropped! Wipe that smirk off your face!" And then Jack proceeded to wipe that smirk off Randy's face with his own hand.

Jack went on, "I can't stand it around this filthy house anymore with a whining woman, two bratty kids, and constant hamburger hash." With that, Jack grabbed his coat and stormed out the front door. He didn't come home that night, and returned the next evening to continue his pleasant one-man show.

Things around the Ludington household continued pretty much in the same vein over the next weeks and months. Martha Ludington was always so busy, and Jack Ludington was seldom home, and hateful when he was home, and Lucinda and Randy amused themselves wherever they could not hear their father's voice. And life went on. Life, with its sweepings and dustings, its bakings and broilings, its D's in math and its conferences at school, its colds and its upset stomachs, its bills to pay and its garbage to empty, went on.

Then, one day in mid-October, Lucinda came to know real sadness for the first time. Mother told her the reason for her tears: Uncle Bob had just called to say that Grandpa Morley had suffered a stroke that morning and had died on the way to the hospital. Those next few days were somewhat of a blur of strange things for Lucinda: crying aunts and uncles, family fights over something she didn't understand, cakes and Jello salads from the neighbors, a house constantly full of people coming and going, her mother's uncontrollable hysterics, the ride in the black

limousine, but worst of all—the quick glance at the grandpa in the casket who wasn't really Grandpa.

But it all ended, and Lucinda went back to school, having known death and a funeral, but remembering Grandpa with love and joy, and thankfulness for the wonderful gift he had made only for her. She couldn't understand why everyone else couldn't remember him that way and go on with living just as they had before Grandpa had died. Didn't old people always die? And why did Mom have to cry and carry on so much now, when she had always been so nasty to Grandpa when he was alive and well? Surely she can't care that much now that he is dead—she used to crab at him every time he ate because he clicked his false teeth too much. And she used to tell him all the time that he was too old to drive a car. And a hundred other little things. Why does she cry all the time now because he's dead?

Lucinda went on playing with her doll house every day, and she always thought a little bit about Grandpa whenever she did play with it. Occasionally Beth Ann or Donna would come over to play doll house with Lucinda, but they didn't like to do that to the complete exclusion of everything else. Randy lived in constant fear that the guys would find out about his morning of indiscretion in the attic, and would never again go near the Poeppelmeiers' residence.

One rainy afternoon, Lucinda's mother agreed to play the game with her daughter for just a half hour. "Then I have to fix dinner," she said.

"Mrs. Poeppelmeier is having friends over for tea this afternoon," Lucinda told her mother. "She's having so much trouble with Peter. He keeps banging on the piano, and she is going out of her mind. And Pamela spilled a glass of milk on the living room rug, and the maid had to clean it up. The spot is still wet, and Mrs. Poeppelmeier is so upset. What will her guests think?"

"Perhaps I can move this coffee table over here and cover the spot so the guests can't see it," suggested Mother.

"That's a grand idea, Mrs. Poeppelmeier. Now the tea will be a success."

Lucinda and her mother played tea party all afternoon, and Mother forgot all about fixing dinner. But it really didn't matter too much, because Mr. Ludington didn't come home anyway, and the two children always preferred tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches over a big dinner.

The next afternoon, Lucinda only had to ask her mother once if she would play doll house with her.

"Oh, I guess I could for just a little while," her mother said. "What's going on at the Poeppelmeiers' today?"

"Well," said Lucinda, "they're having a little trouble at the Poeppelmeiers' today. Mr. Poeppelmeier didn't come home for dinner again this evening, and Mrs. Poeppelmeier is all upset. She is crying—she cries every evening lately. And she is screaming at Pamela and Peter. They didn't really do anything, but she is screaming at them anyway, for nothing at all."

Lucinda's mother was quite dismayed to hear the bad

news. "Poor Mrs. Poeppelmeier—no wonder she is so upset. Perhaps we should try to find out where Mr. Poeppelmeier is. He probably just had to work late at the office. Here—give me the phone, and I'll check at his office. 'Hello, may I please speak to Mr. Poeppelmeier? Oh, he isn't? Are you quite sure? Well, thank you anyway.' He wasn't there—now what will I do? He promised me he'd be home this evening for dinner. And I told Wilma Worthington that Paul and I would go over to their house for awhile tonight. Now what will I tell them?"

"Maybe he'll be home pretty soon, Mother. You get too upset over everything."

"You'd better keep your mouth shut, you little smart aleck. You don't know everything about adults' problems."

"Oh, Mother, make Peter stop making those ugly faces at me! He's ugly enough without trying to be as gross as he possibly can be. You could at least make him clean the green scum off his teeth before he starts making those ugly faces!"

"All right! Pamela and Peter, both of you, off to bed this minute! You do nothing but cause me trouble. As if I didn't have enough trouble as it is. What terrible crosses I have to bear! A husband who never comes home, children who are such dreadful brats, and a nervous stomach besides. Gracious!"

Lucinda and her mother played doll house all that afternoon and evening, and Randy had to fix himself peanut butter sandwiches for supper again. Finally, Lucinda said she was starting to get pretty tired, and she went downstairs to bed. Mr. Ludington didn't come home at all that night, but Mrs. Ludington didn't seem to notice.

The next day, Randy was home from school sick with a high fever, but Mrs. Ludington didn't have too much time to care for him, because Peter Poeppelmeier had a bad cold, and she had to read stories to him. Mr. Ludington didn't come home that night either.

Lucinda was completely happy these days, because she had a constant playmate in the attic, and her mother didn't seem to get so upset over every little thing anymore. And when her dad didn't come home on time, or didn't come home until the next day, her mother didn't seem to yell and scream at him anymore. In fact, she hardly seemed to notice. They had a lot of bologna and peanut butter sandwiches for dinner, but Lucinda didn't really mind that.

Every day for the next few weeks, Lucinda and her mother played upstairs in the attic with the Poeppelmeiers and their house.

One afternoon, while the two were busy playing, Lucinda left for awhile to fix herself a snack. Mrs. Ludington went on playing tea party.

"Oh, really, Mrs. Worthington!"

"Mother! Mother!" Lucinda came running up the attic stairs three at a time. "You've got to come quick! Jeff threw a rock and hit Randy, and his eye is bleeding all over the place! Hurry!"

"Why, Mrs. Worthington, I didn't think she would do a thing like that!" Mrs. Ludington went on.

"Mother—didn't you hear me? I said Randy's eye is bleeding! You've got to do something—call the ambulance or something!"

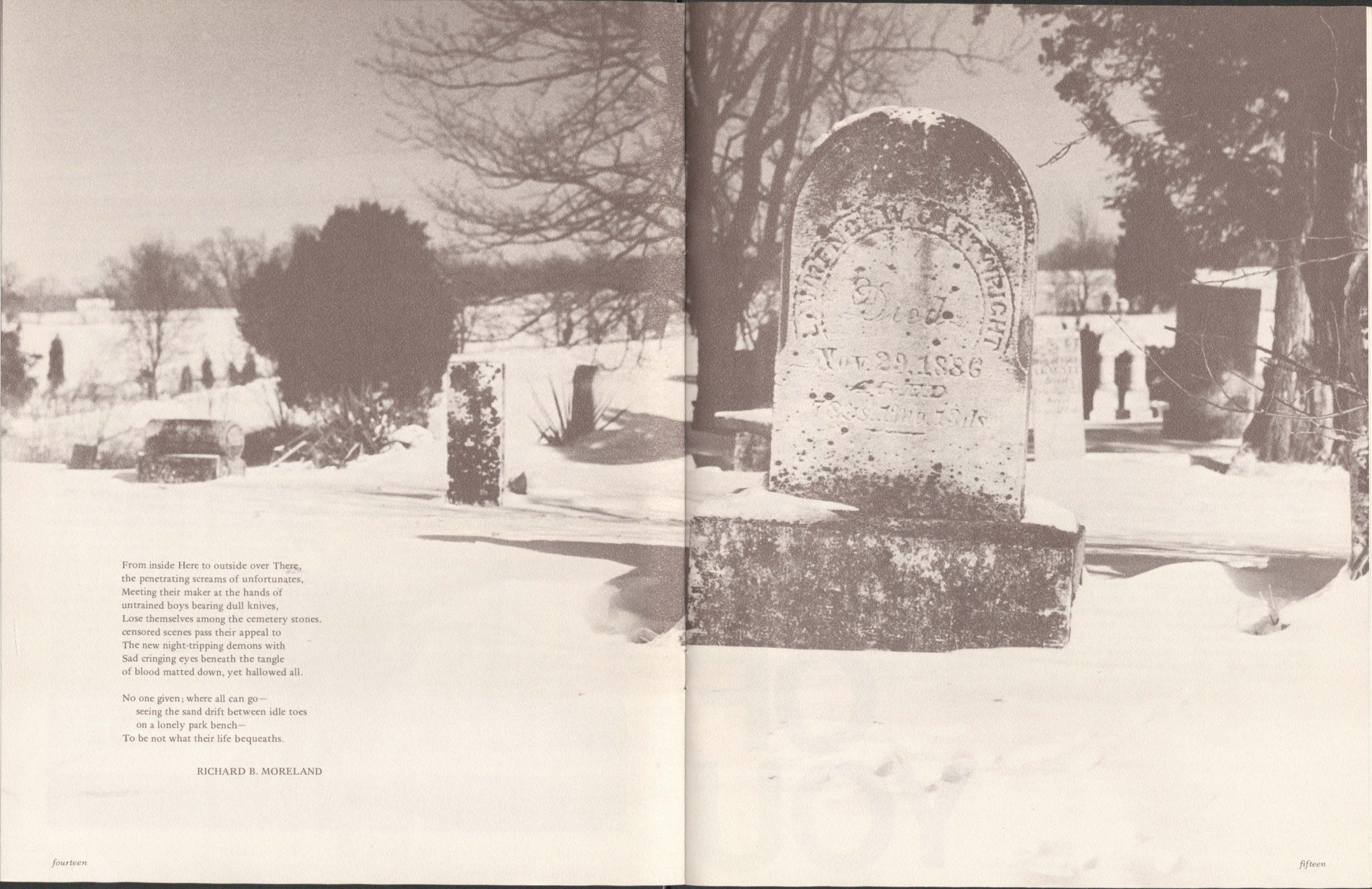
"Yes, Dear. I'll call in a little while. Can't you see Mother's having tea with some of her most important friends?"

"Mother! Mother! You've got to come right now!" Lucinda ran to her mother and shook her, pleading with her to come.

Martha Ludington went right on pouring tea into the tiny little china tea cups at the tiny little tea table for tiny little Mrs. Poeppelmeier.

Lucinda, now ghastly white, suddenly passed the innocence of childhood, ran down the steps, called the ambulance, and went to the yard to comfort her brother's agony.





From inside Here to outside over There,
the penetrating screams of unfortunates,
Meeting their maker at the hands of
untrained boys bearing dull knives,
Lose themselves among the cemetery stones.
censored scenes pass their appeal to
The new night-tripping demons with
Sad cringing eyes beneath the tangle
of blood matted down, yet hallowed all.

No one given; where all can go—
seeing the sand drift between idle toes
on a lonely park bench—
To be not what their life bequeaths.

RICHARD B. MORELAND

ON TAKING THE WHO OUT OF YOU

Stephen Woodward

The other day our good friend Kathi made what we consider to be one of the few profound statements of the present century. Not long, not complex (no orator she), it was merely salted with the rightest amount of common sense, knowledge, and propriety that an eighteen-year-old girl from the Ohio heartland could muster. And we might add that her few words sat in the stomach of our mind rather like a marshmallow which has attained Grecian perfection by being plucked from the fire in the split-second before it begins to burn.

"I'm just me," Kathi said.

I'm just me! Was ever a statement so true, so thoughtfully penetrating, so massively mighty as to shake the very pillars of the heaven above us?

I'm just me! Through the towering centuries of mankind's existence has ever a mortal being reduced the secret of life itself to such a trickle of fallible words?

I'm just me! Can such mere syllables threaten to scale the cliffs of human improbability and propel the animate world anew on the skateboard of life?

Without reservation, we must say that Kathi's profound utterings clearly rank somewhere within the three most significant quotes since August of 1872. One of the other three took place on May 17, 1894, when Tom "Sagebrush" Cowhoon stepped into the first talking western movie ever made and said, "Howdy do." Then, exactly thirty-five years later to the day (a coincidence which keeps historians and other weirdos busy to this day), Calvin Coolidge effectively warded off a contingent of hard-nose reporters hovering at the kitchen door of the White House by mumbling "?".

Of course, we realize that not everyone can be just himself as Kathi has spent a lifetime doing. Kasper Hauser, for example, never knew who he was. Tired, ragged, and

dirty, he showed up one day a hundred years ago at the front gate of a large German town, repeating, "I want to be a soldier like my father was I want to be a soldier like my father was I want to be a . . ." Unfortunately, no one ever found out who he or his father was because Kasper was murdered one fine afternoon during a stroll in the town park. Nowadays, it is generally accepted that, although Kasper's assailant did not know who Kasper was, he probably knew who he himself was, while the German police had no idea who either man was (mainly because Jack Anderson had not yet been invented).

On the other hand, there is the strange case of Pinkus Peasley, who woke up at 3:26 one dark December morning several years ago in Teaneck, New Jersey, with the sudden knowledge that he was the reincarnation of Napoleon Bonaparte. Hospital officials and other so-called experts testified that Pinkus was probably lying about his identity since at the time it was well known that Gideon Sundback, formerly of Hoboken and co-inventor of the zipper, also once made the same claim. Finally, the judge presiding over the hearing convinced Pinkus that he was in reality a reincarnation of Gideon's zipper, whereupon they zipped him shut, and he was never heard from again.

So you see, it pays to know who you are before you try to start being just you. Some people acknowledge this fact, and so they go to California to find themselves (or get lost in the attempt). However, that is a different story, and one into which we would prefer not to delve at this time.

Let us just say that Kathi's epoch-shattering slip of a proverb—"I'm just me" (or in the case of schizophrenics, two-headed water nymphs, and men of a thousand faces, "I'm just us")—let us just say that it is just itself. And as for Kathi, we never thought that you could be anyone else.

SHARPENED POINTS

Gregg Walborn

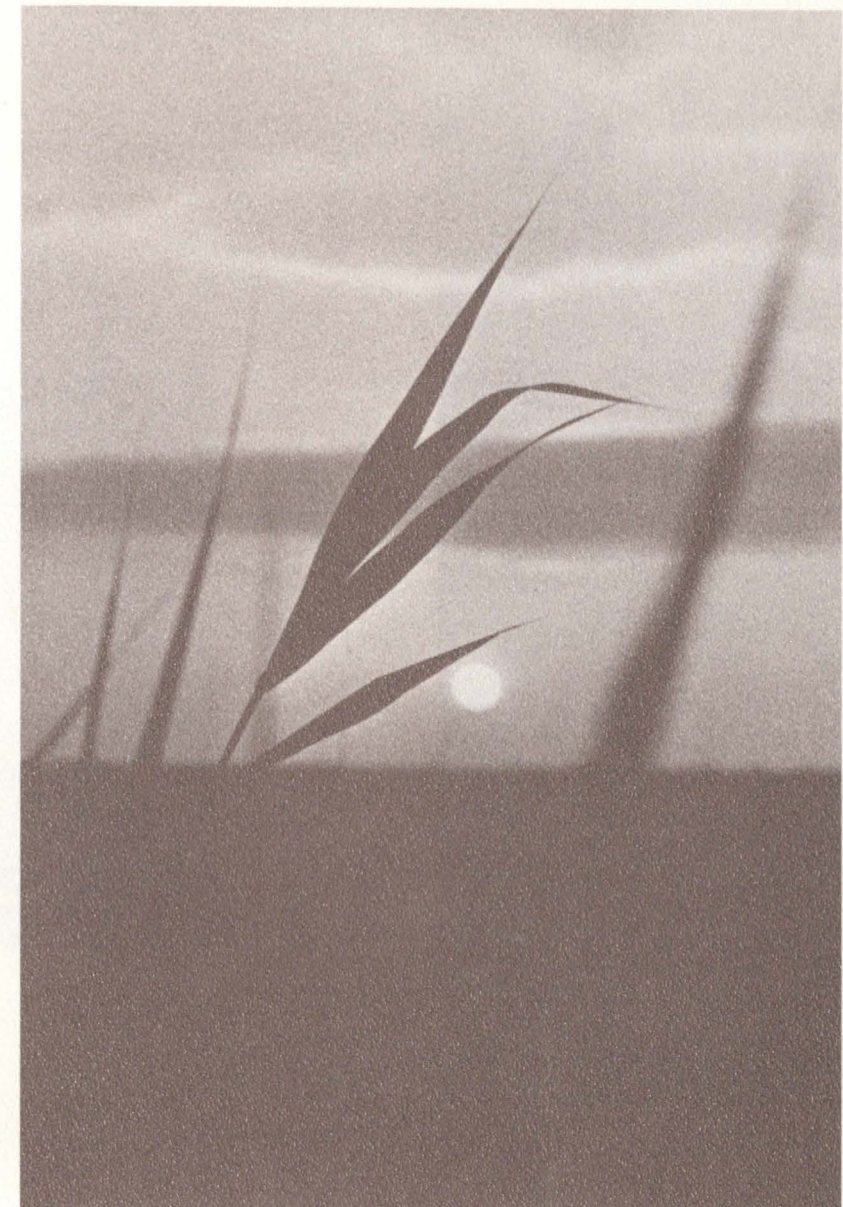
Death is no more the door by which I wait.
I shall not be daylight-rusher in
Search of shadows in our nights.
For it is the bee upon a morning wake
In flight to fulfill a dream of insect flesh
And chemical cravings.
I too am a victim of this body haunt
Where wills beyond my conception will,
And purpose often swaggers underfoot.

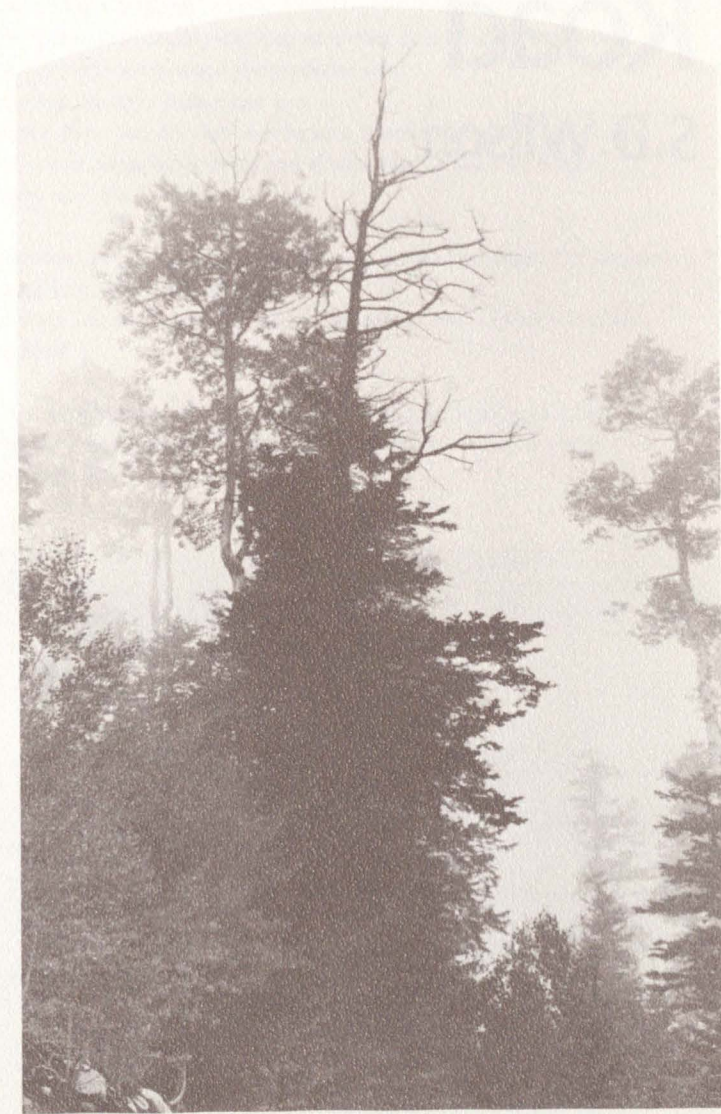
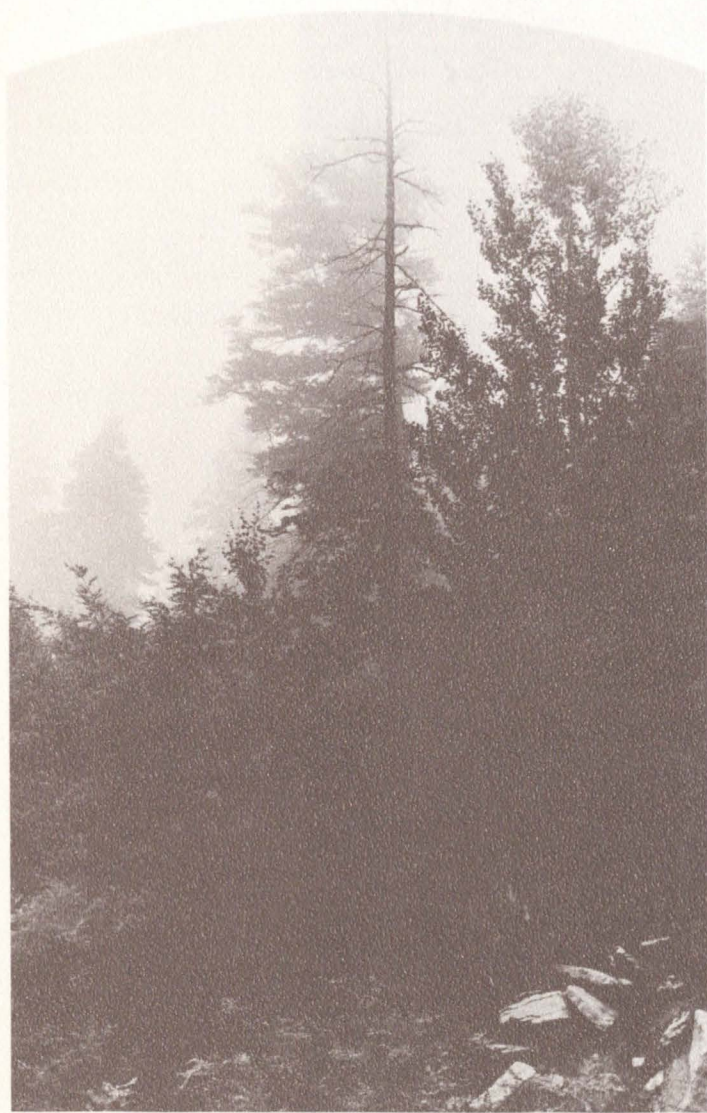
Yet no more pitted bumper thoughts shall
Invade my heart. Already polluted are
The filmy conclusions of my seam.
I am to be my Hercules,
Freer of whimpering bands that reach out from a past
Where whimpering is tradition avoiding its grave.
Death is my reality, but less than that I know
Many truths which sing my dance within my
Moments peace from where I wander seconds within the hour.

The barrel of my mind is all I can aim, and
Aim it well is what explodes as each
Cartridge of existence blasts my morning skies.

So I will remember that death is a waiter,
And I am of different breeds, and we can
Only mix at one sharpened point—

And I shall not fall empty.
My blood will spill a dance upon the
Face of dirt and universe all before unknown.





• J. IN GREY MOORE — •

A Dirt Road

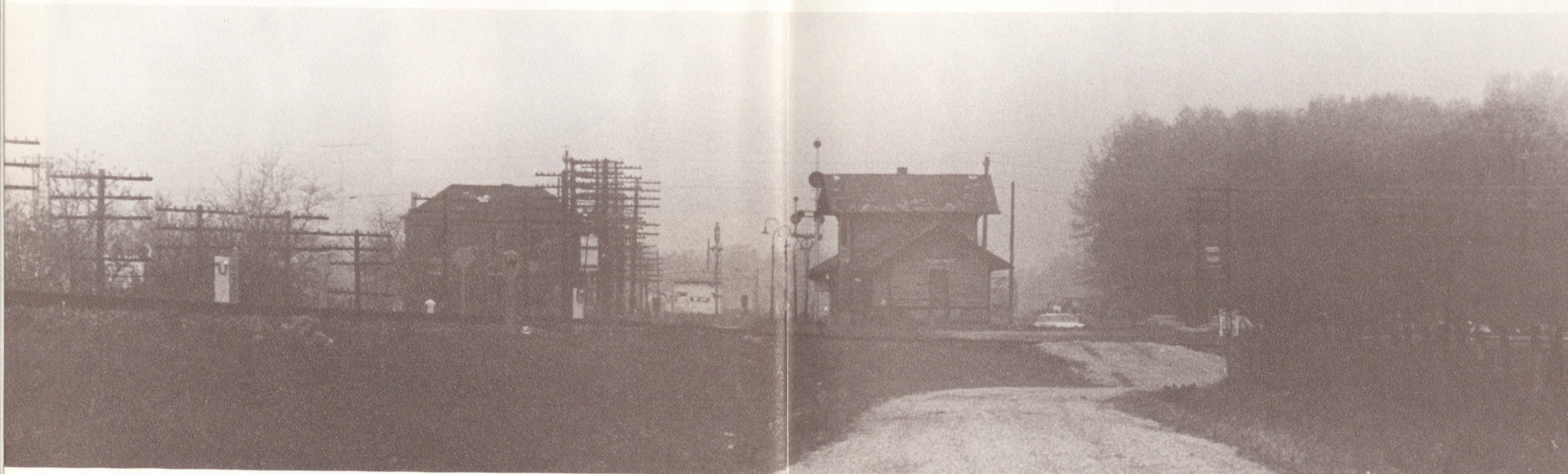
S.D. Wilson

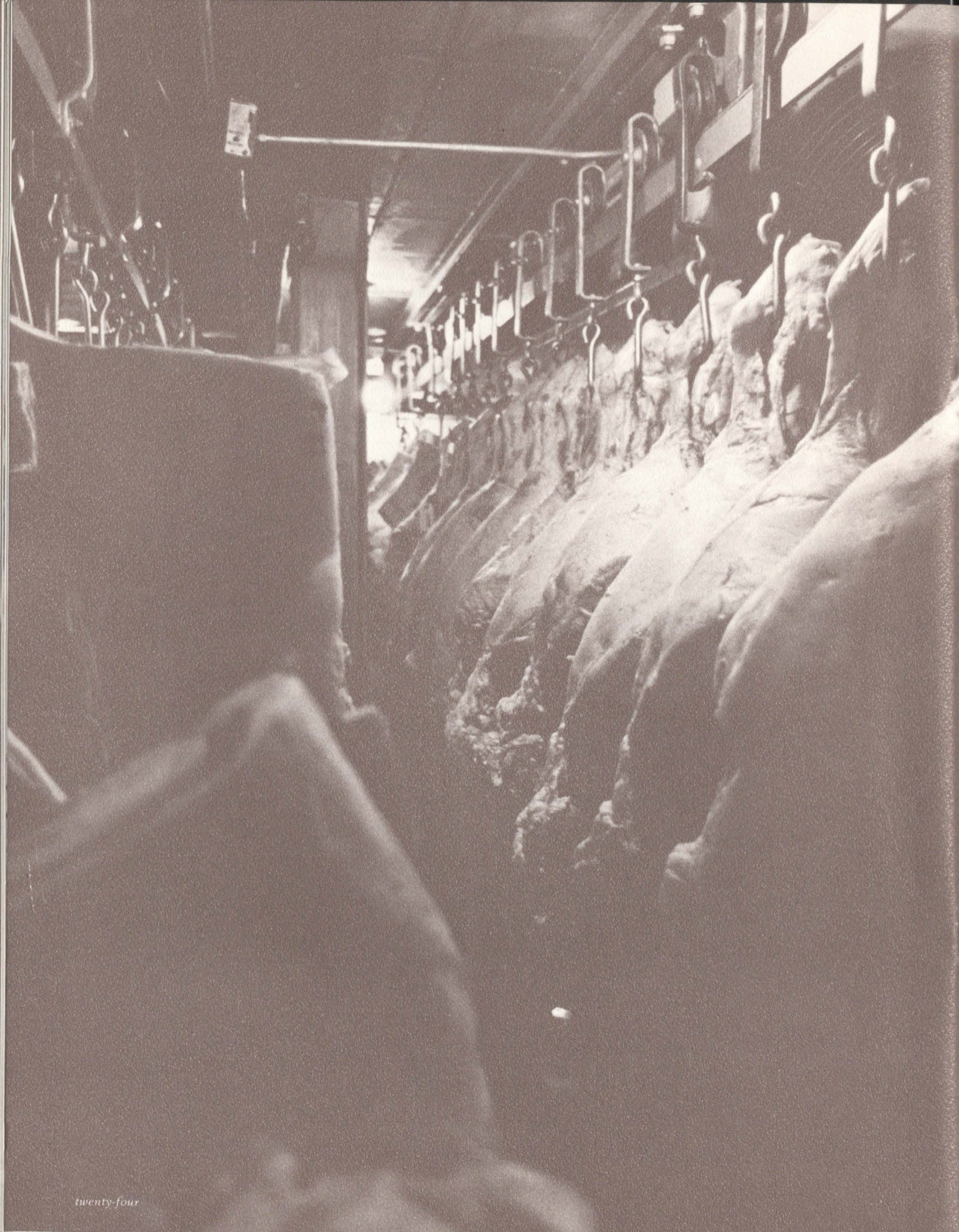
I bet I've walked this old dirt road a million times,
and kicked rocks and cans and picked wild flowers now and then
waved to smiling faces aboard the school bus and Jenny, our
raggie dog running to meet us and the sun burning my face,
just like yesterday.

I remember Sundays and the fried chicken, my brother and I
would swipe and run
And Mama and Daddy chasing us down this road, just for fun
and the time we pushed the outhouse over
stole my father's Irish Rose
builded play houses out of concrete blocks and slept out doors
Winter evenings by the fire and Christmas's I'll never forget
Daddy and his T.V. sets.

There was joy, tears and even sorrow, hopes and plans for tomorrow
that didn't owrk, just like life
but then for us, there was a letter box and lots of love on that
dirt road

Years, bulldozers and concrete have replaced it all and I can
never go back, I keep it safe in a special place, locked up in
my heart. I won't forget.





The Flagellation

Marianne Pope

They stopped and watched her move through the water. Not like American men, instead stretching out their scrawny necks with mouths half open. Jean knew their stare. Sometimes it was all she could do to hold back an obscene gesture at these child-like little men with their black oily hair and silly grins. But today, emerging from the blue-green liquid, she just stretched the length of her lithe firm body towards the sun. Then lowering herself onto the lounge chair she muttered, "Eat your hearts out, fellas."

The champagne was there on the little stand next to her with the single long-stemmed glass. That meant Louie and his gooks were sitting at the table under the palm tree on the hotel lawn across from her. They said he was a

gangster—a huk. Jean laughed softly to herself, "Like a scene from some goddamned cheap movie, sitting there with his black suit, dark shirt and skinny white tie flanked by his two bodyguards. Jesus, it's like a steam room out here." She closed her eyes and let the languor of the heat envelop her.

"Hey, you going to sleep all day?" Suzie's unmistakable twitter nudged Jean out of her temporary stupor. "Jean, I want you to meet Ed. Ed, this is Jean, my very best friend. Hey, you shouldn't let this stuff go to waste." Suzie poured herself a glass of the bubbly and with a giggle made a toast in Louie's direction. A few minutes later the waiter brought out more glasses and a tray of tiny sandwiches. "Nice guy

that Louie." Suzie said. "You could at least smile at him once in a while, Jean." Then she was off on another tangent. "Oh, Jean, you've just got to come along with us today. Ed's going to take us to the Flagellation. It's not every day you get to see something like this. Ed says they actually nail some guy to a cross and everything!" "Suzie, what the hell are you talking about?" "Oh, Ed, you tell her about it." Jean really hadn't looked at the guy. Now as she squinted in his direction she could see that he was one of those typical Air Force types here for a couple of weeks from Nam to attend the jungle survival school at Clark. All-American all the way. Short, sandy hair, thick neck and eyes that left no doubt that he was horny as hell and proud as shit that he'd found himself a good lay. All stews were good lays, everyone knew that. A jab from Suzie got him to bring his thoughts out of the gutter long enough to blurt out, "Yeah, this Filipino dude in a bar downtown told me all about it. A religious ritual that they act out in the streets of the barrios on Good Friday every year." "Come on, Jean, it'll be fun, okay?" Suzie looked like a little kid hanging on the guy's arm and peering intently at Jean for some response. Jean had always treated her like a kid sister. They had been through a lot together the past year and a half, making the run between Clark and San Francisco. "All right," Jean said. "Nothing better to do around this hole anyhow. But I've got to get dressed first." With that, GI Joe did another head-to-toe scan with his hungry eyes as if this was going to be the last woman's body he'd ever see. Suzie had one hand stretched out pulling Jean to her feet and the other shoving down the last bit of food left on the platter. "Yeah, nice guy that Louie," she repeated. They had to walk past the three men on their way out. Suzie gave Louie a wide grin and a wink. Jean could see him out of the corner of her eye. He hadn't missed a thing, his beady eyes twinkling with amusement. "Don't you think he's neat, Jean? I mean a real gangster?" "It's like being in a goddamned zoo," Jean said through her teeth.

GI Joe was sitting on the hood of a rented old Simca fiddling with the lenses of his Petri. "Come on, will ya. We'll miss everything if you girls don't get your rears in gear." The trip through Angeles City was hot and tiring. Cars, jeepnies, pedicabs and caribou all vying for a piece of the roadway. Jean sat next to the window on the passenger side and did her best to ignore the screeching brakes, horns honking and Suzie's incessant chatter. "Poor bastards," she said to herself, eyeing the street scene. Wood carving shops and bars lined the roadway. Unbelievably filthy children routed through the garbage. Others just sat listlessly on broken steps, huge brown eyes betraying the emptiness inside.

"We'll have to hoof it from here," Whatshisname announced. Ragged kids descended like locust as the car ground to a muddy halt. Grimy little hands clinging to the door handles and bumpers screaming, "Watch you car, Watch you car?" Suzie made a big production out of selecting the number one boy to be given the honor of guarding the heap of junk. "Will you come on Suzie, Jesus Christ."

They did their best to keep up. GI Joe strode headlong through the cluttered alleys. Clusters of dirty men leaned against thatched roof huts, kicking at clods of caribou dung as they openly leered at the two round eyes in their midst. An urgent tug at the hem of Jean's shift made her aware of a legless beggar who propelled himself after her on a wooden plank with rollers attached. He implored with outstretched hands, "Centavos mum, Centavos mum?" She shrank away in disgust and increased her gait to outpace the hideous legless creature that rolled after them. "Jesus Christ, Suzie, I hope this son of a bitch knows where he's going." Suzie just shrugged her shoulders, stopping a moment to adjust her load of camera equipment, then scurried to catch up lest she be left behind.

Apparently he was on the right track. They turned down another narrow street. Now all the rabble was headed in the same direction and a primitive festive mood permeated the thick, humid air. Two cheap speakers atop bamboo poles blared forth a woman's high pitched wail. The action began to quicken. "Jesus, where did all these people come from?" But Jean found that she was only talking to herself. The crowd thickened becoming one sweaty mass, closing off any possible retreat. Jean concentrated on keeping her footing lest she should stumble and fall. She could see over the sea of bobbing heads that the attention of the swaying bodies was directed towards some kind of procession moving her way. "Hey, this can't be for real," Jean muttered aloud. There was a long line of sweaty men, naked except for the cloths wrapped around their waists. Each swung a thick rope with a huge knot tied at the end. Every swing of the rope ended in a dull thud on the back of the participant. It became sickeningly clear why this was called the Flagellation. Bright-red blood mixed with sweat streamed down from raw backs, soaking their loin cloths as they stumbled forward.

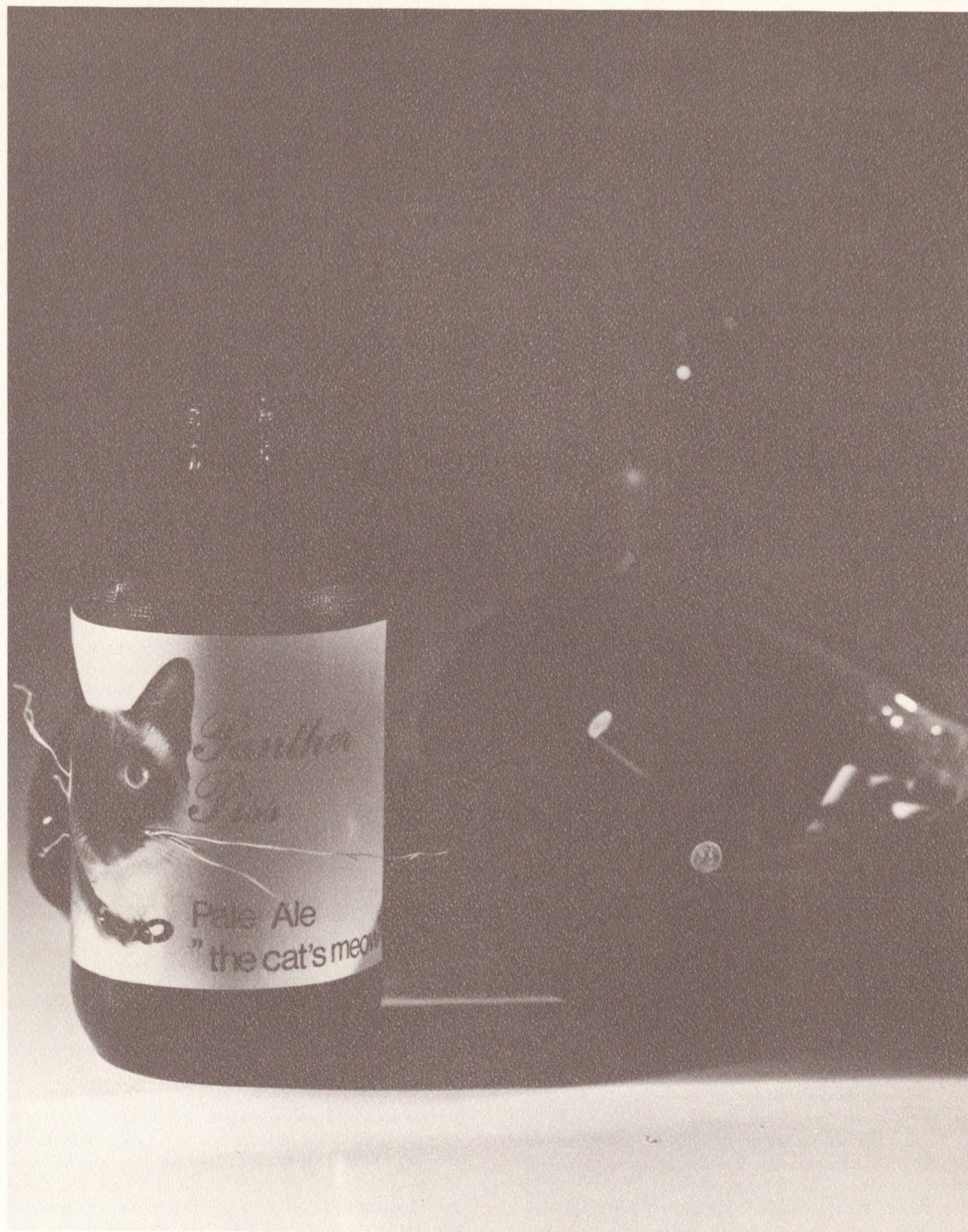
"This is crazy, I've got to get out of here!" Jean said. She searched the now swimming faces for Suzie and her boyfriend. Instead, she saw only old shriveled women rocking back and forth on their haunches moaning and little kids with firmly-held branches swatting at the men who tripped and fell. The knotted ropes had become soaked with blood and tiny droplets flew through the air.

Jean watched helplessly as splatter after splatter assaulted her from space. The whole scene took on a pink tinge for Jean and somehow she no longer felt a part of the horror. She knew that she was fainting but didn't care. The ground was coming up to meet her when a pair of dark hands reached out from behind. She was moving forward now through the wall of people who only moments before sealed her in position. Without protest or question she tumbled into the back seat of the long black car. She just sat there and shook, bloodstained hands covering her face. She had never heard his voice before, but she knew it was Louie who said, "You're all right now, Jean. I'll take you home." She dropped her hands into her lap and turned to stare into his eyes. Then she began to laugh. Laugh as she could never remember doing before. "Louis," she thought, "I hope you like a good lay. You've earned it."

a P.S.

Stuart Ebrlich

It wasn't steaming nor streaming
Without cascading sunshine or
Fluorescent, effervescent smiles,
Tricycles or Beech-Nut gum but
It was a chewingly, bubblely good
Time when I was a sponge for a
While through a cold and brittle life.
When one is a hard person, even
In choice, it isn't easy to bounce.
I bounced today.



Martial Music On Saturday

John Palcewski

Thomas fell slowly through the thin upper atmosphere. He glided in a forward, controlled direction, and watched the brown squares and patches of fields, silver specks of metal-roofed barns, thin strips of highways and roads grow larger and larger, ponderously moving toward him; he heard the rushing, roaring of wind past his ears, and he inhaled with exhilaration. He wasn't falling, he was flying . . . he was a craft operated and driven by technology and intelligence, the hum of a large computer. Not like wine bottles tossed out of ghetto tenement windows to crash on a littered courtyard below; rather like an albatross settling on the mast of a ship; a seagull lighting on a white, sandy shore.

"Good morning!" a resonant, artificial voice said. It was the radio that Thomas had left on the night before. The announcer always was cheerful, enthusiastic and nauseating. He'd begin with his "good morning," then announce that

the station was beginning another broadcast day. Then the sounds of a scratchy, loud recording of "Our National Anthem."

Thomas's reaction was nostalgia. He could clearly see himself standing at attention on a burning concrete runway of an Air Force base in Texas. Hundreds of others like himself, dressed in Class A blues, standing in formation for a parade. The flags carried by the honor guard pop and flutter in the gusty air; the military band echoed brassy patriotism from huge aircraft hangars. He would be sweating, and he would whiff the hot leather of his service cap . . . then the adjutant: "PASS IN REVIEEEEEWWW-UUU!"

And the band and honor guard would precede the columns down past the reviewing stand. Everyone in step, feeling an abstract sense of pride and power being part of an "Aerospace Team." And the fitting climax of three F-84 jet fighters flying in formation, screaming two hundred feet above the runway . . . roaring, whining, right above the marching columns. He would see the Wing Commander, a brigadier general, standing erect with his hand rigidly saluting, along with a gaggle of other officers, their brass gleaming in the sun, silver clouds with lightning bolts across their black polished visors . . . the remembrance put a lump in Thomas's throat.

He sat on the edge of the bed, holding his head in his hands. It was stupid to get up, considering his condition. He was sick. His face was burning, his eyes were reddish and glistening, his hands trembled, he felt like throwing up. The room was cluttered with empty wine bottles and beer cans; the sheets on the bed were rumpled and dirty-grey, blotched with red stains of spilt wine. The ashtray beside the bed was overflowing; the floor was covered with brown burn marks. The room had a stench of dirty underwear, socks, too much cigarette smoke, the smell of an unwashed body.

"And now—'Washington Post,'" the voice on the radio said, "by John Philip Sousa. . ." Thomas turned up the volume and adjusted the tone, striking a satisfactory balance between bass and treble. The radio was large, with gleaming silver dials, a polished walnut cabinet, and a glowing greenish dial plate. Thomas had spent a hundred and fifty dollars for it. The radio was the only clean looking thing in the room.

Thomas pulled a rumpled cigarette from a nearly empty pack and lit it, drawing tentatively, carefully. Sometimes his first drag the morning after a binge would produce vomiting. This time the smoke felt good going in. He listened to the march, padding a barefoot tempo on the dirty floor.

The Lieutenant, Thomas mused. *What a stupid ass . . .* He remembered one night when he was assigned to the orderly room as Charge of Quarters. The Lieutenant walked in carrying a duffel bag over his shoulder and a handful of papers. Thomas said to him, "May I help you?" The Lieutenant had on a brand new uniform, highly polished

gold bars, a spit shine on his shoes. Obviously a recent graduate of college R.O.T.C.

"Yes, I wonder if I'm in the right place," the Lieutenant said.

"Let's see your orders," Thomas said, taking the papers. He studied them, playing the role of a petty bureaucrat. The Lieutenant stood patiently, waiting for Thomas to speak.

"No," Thomas finally said. "You're *not* in the right place, Lieutenant."

"I'm not?"

"No." Thomas paused, leaning back in his chair. "Your orders say Roswell, New Mexico."

"Roswell?"

"That's right," Thomas said grinning. "This happens to be Amarillo, Texas."

"Let me see those orders again," the Lieutenant said. He looked at them carefully, making little sense out of the columns of abbreviations and names. "Well, what should I do?" he said, almost to himself.

"I suggest you go down to the Greyhound bus station and buy yourself a ticket," Thomas said.

"Goddamn . . ." the Lieutenant said, shaking his head. He picked up his duffel bag and was about to walk out of the orderly room. He stared at his orders, trying to find a mistake.

Thomas felt compassion. "Look, pal," Thomas said. "I was just pulling your leg. You're in the right place. I'll get you a room in the transient officers' quarters until Monday morning. Then you can start processing into the squadron."

"Christ, you really had me going for a minute!" the Lieutenant said.

"Yeah," Thomas said. (He had him going all right. Wasn't Thomas's nickname "Wise-ass Greenfield"?)

But his head still hurt. Thomas pulled on his pants and walked down the hallway toward the kitchen. He opened the door of the refrigerator. Two quart bottles of beer were left from the five he had bought the night before. He ignored a rotting half-head of lettuce, three empty and putrid milk cartons, and a package of rectal suppositories (one of the other tenants who shared the kitchen had hemorrhoids) and took the cold quart of beer to his room. He sat in his chair at the open window and twisted the aluminum cap of the bottle.

The view fit Thomas's mood: fire escapes of reddish-brown slum tenements, heaps of old newspapers, broken bottles, trash—all piled over the courtyard five stories below. People didn't bother to put their garbage in cans. It was easier for them to toss it out of their windows.

He swallowed a mouthful of beer and shuddered with a brief wave of nausea. He swallowed again, to make sure it would stay down. Directly across the way, an old man came out on the fire escape and pattered with his row of potted plants. Every morning he would come out, weather permitting, to water or weed, and to take several of the pots up to the roof for some sunlight. He picked up two and climbed the rusty steps. Down below, a large grey-striped cat sat motionless, staring at the piles of trash,

waiting for some vermin to scurry around. Thomas reached in his pocket and got out a handful of change. He tossed a penny in the cat's direction. It hit about four feet away from the animal. The cat made an abrupt, quick motion of his head, fixing his gaze on where the sound of the coin came from. Thomas threw another penny.

The Lieutenant showed up Monday to sign into the squadron and to begin processing. He was quite impressed by the First Sergeant, who wore a chest full of decorations, a weatherbeaten, hard looking face, a gruff and abrupt manner. "Put your John-Henry right there, Loo-tenant, then report to Building 1406, room 6. Major Gibson is expecting you."

"Yes sir," the Lieutenant had answered.

The sergeant looked up. "You don't have to call me 'sir,' Loo-tenant."

"Oh, right. Right, Sergeant."

Thomas, who had been in the orderly room to check his mail, was startled to hear an officer call an enlisted man "sir." When the Lieutenant left, he and the sergeant laughed. "Goddamn Second Looies. Don't know their ass from a hole in the ground," Thomas said.

"Yeah, ain't that the truth," the Sergeant said. "Oh, by the way, Greenfield."

"What, Sarge?"

"I'm gonna put you on temporary duty here in the orderly room for a coupla days. Your section says they can spare you. George over there is gonna be on leave."

"Sure, why not?" Thomas said.

Three days later, the Lieutenant came into the orderly room. Thomas was sprawled in his chair, reading a newspaper, with his feet up on the desk. He looked up. "Oh, hiya, Lieutenant!" he grinned.

The Lieutenant looked stern. The muscles at the sides of his jaw twitched. "Get on your feet when you're talking to an officer, *mister*!"

Thomas put the paper down. "Uh?"

"STAND AT ATTENTION!"

Thomas got up slowly. "Oh, yes sir!" He clicked his heels and put a limp hand to his forehead.

The Lieutenant smartly returned his salute. "Okay, at ease. Is the First Sergeant in?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Tell him Lieutenant Macko is here to see him."

"Right," Thomas said, reaching for the intercom.

"Right what, mister?"

"I mean, Yes sir."

Thomas announced the Lieutenant. The sergeant told Thomas to send him right in. The lieutenant paused. "You're heading for a hell of a lot of trouble with that attitude, Airman," he glowered.

"I'll keep it in mind, sir," Thomas said.

The grey cat in the courtyard grew tired of the game of penny pitching, and ambled off. Thomas took another long drink of beer. His headache was beginning to improve. A glow of well-being slowly spread from his stomach. The

sound of the marching music took on a more resonant cast; the light from the window became bright and vivid. Thomas felt exultant as the beer took effect and his hang-over receded.

Lieutenant Macko was a navigator, recently graduated from Air Training Command flight school in Big Springs, Texas. His first assignment was to the 35th Bomb Wing, Strategic Air Command, Amarillo Air Force Base, Texas. He had ranked tenth in his class of ninety-three, and it was felt he would end up being a truly outstanding navigator. But Lieutenant Macko did not have much of an eye for detail, as he found out after his first series of domestic practice bombing runs. According to the photo-interpretation section, which was responsible for mission and bombing evaluation, Lieutenant Macko missed his assigned targets by an average distance of 3,000 feet—scores which were clearly unacceptable.

Good navigators could place a theoretical nuclear weapon within 1,500 feet of the target. Macko rationalized to himself that the Wing was setting some extraordinarily high standards, because a hydrogen bomb dropped half a mile away from any target would result in tremendous damage. Radiation and fallout would in themselves do the job. 3,000 feet wasn't that bad.

Macko's scores would come in the form of a Mission Evaluation sheet, signed by a Captain Lockerman. Macko was confused at how he could consistently end up being so far off target. Each of his bomb runs so far had looked good to him. He had identified his ground position indicators, he had done what he thought was a great job on celestial fixes; when he went into sector scan on the radar, and had radioed the pilot to give him "second station"—control of the aircraft for the bombing run—he saw his target nailed by the glowing cross-hairs. But still, his final score was always off.

There would be little point arguing with the photo-interpretation section. The aircraft's radar scope was equipped with a 35mm camera, which took photographs of the entire mission. From that photography, the evaluator could project with reasonable accuracy where a nuclear weapon would have landed if it had been dropped when the navigator indicated "bombs away." Simple mathematics.

Macko resented his first day on the base. It was his initial contact with enlisted men. The Airman in the orderly room was arrogant, smart. ". . . I suggest you get a ticket on a Greyhound bus," or something like that. And that self-indulgent First Sergeant. "Old Bull of the Woods," the other officers called him. Major Gibson had chewed Macko out in the cafeteria, he remembered, after he related the incident. "What in hell made you call an enlisted man 'sir'?" Gibson had asked.

"I never really thought about it, sir," Macko had replied.

"Let's get this thing straight, Macko. On the one hand it's a damn foolish officer who doesn't respect his sergeants. They happen to be the backbone of any military service. They are Non-Commissioned Officers. You are a *commissioned* officer and a gentleman, by act of Congress. The

distinction being that you're supposed to possess the leadership qualities right now that the NCO may take years and years to learn. This isn't to say that you have a right to, to . . . *shit* on them. But it certainly doesn't mean *they* have the right to shit on you. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir."

"And another thing. I've been looking over your navigation runs. They're just not cutting the mustard. You know what the minimums are. What seems to be your problem?"

"Frankly, sir, I don't really know. The runs look good to me when I'm up there."

"Have you been getting additional target information from the photo-interpretation section? Charts, film, recon photos?"

"No sir."

"Well, you damn well better. Go see your sergeant friend in the orderly room and get some briefing sessions set up. You'll need a pass from him to get into the section."

"Yes sir."

"And I don't want you taking any more shit from enlisted men, understand?"

"Yes sir. Thank you, I really appreciate it, sir."

With that admonition in mind, Macko had gone back to the orderly room to set that young airman straight. He also presented a different image to the Old Bull of the Woods. The airman had been startled by his newly acquired sense of authority. The Sergeant had merely grinned.

The 35th Bomb Wing's Photo Interpretation section was located two doors from Intelligence Division; both occupied the entire basement floor of Flight Operations. Armed Air Police patrolled all entrances, demanding security passes from all who requested entry. Those discovered without such passes in Restricted Areas were promptly arrested and interrogated—although the only arrests made were on Intelligence agents who were testing the security set-up.

Thomas Greenfield, Airman First Class, snapped a spool of 35mm radar film on the viewing machine. Scribbled on a white label on the film can were numbers that indicated that the bomb run would take place in the midwestern part of the United States. The mission would start, of course, at Amarillo Air Force base. The flight plan called for a direct northeasterly leg to Des Moines. From Des Moines, the aircraft would proceed to Cedar Rapids; thence to the target, a railroad marshalling yard in Madison, Wisconsin. Thomas had been scoring missions for the wing since his graduation from the photo-intelligence school in Omaha, Nebraska. He had achieved a reputation of being one of the best evaluators in the 5th Air Force. Captain Lockerman, head of the section, no longer bothered to check Thomas's work. He merely signed the evaluation sheets as soon as Thomas turned them in.

There was a knock on the door. Thomas shut off the machine, and yelled, "Come in!"

The door opened, and in walked Lieutenant Macko. "Lieutenant!" Thomas said.

"You?" Macko said. "What are you doing here?"

Thomas curtly explained that he worked there—as a

matter of fact, he had been there for the past three years. He resented Macko's imperious tone. Who in hell was *he*, a lousy, green Second Lieutenant, barging in with a question like, "What are you doing here?" Thomas wanted to tell the Lieutenant that he, Airman Greenfield, had more time in the goddamn chow line than Macko had in the service. "What can I do for you?" he said instead.

"I came to look over my last bomb run," Macko said. "Not to question the *score*, of course . . . just to more or less get an idea of the procedure."

"Sure, Lieutenant. What was the mission number?"

Thomas had a patronizing attitude toward navigators, much the way an umpire would regard a pitcher or a first baseman. It didn't matter that he himself might actually be incapable of playing baseball well. The important thing was that he was being paid to call the plays. And his decisions would stick.

Thomas saw the situation as an opportunity to show the green Lieutenant how things were done around there. The Lieutenant might just learn a few things. He removed the film of the mission he had been working on, and replaced it with Macko's. "Okay, let's run it from the top, Lieutenant," Thomas said, clearing his throat. Macko's face flushed slightly as he pulled up a chair and sat next to Thomas in front of the machine. They went through the mission.

Macko's problem, it seemed, was that he over-corrected on the second-station stick—the device which controlled the flight of the aircraft during the bomb run. Macko could get the aircraft on a good line all the way through the preliminary part of the mission. When it came to the actual bombing run, Macko got nervous. Or at least that was the way it looked to Thomas. "You're not holding firmly on the off-set aiming components, Lieutenant," Thomas told him, enjoying rubbing it in. "See? You want to keep the cross-hairs on the bottom of this particular radar return, not on the center or on the top."

The Lieutenant bit his lip. Thomas's tone was condescending beyond belief. The damned *presumptuousness* of it all! But Thomas was oblivious to the Lieutenant's emotions. He continued his criticism of the mission, enjoying showing the Lieutenant how ineptly the mission had been flown.

"Now, here's a case where you completely missed the boat, Lieutenant," Thomas said, pointing with the dividers to a bright spot on the screen. "This happens to be point Alpha in the configuration, not Delta. Of course a lot of people get these confused, so it's nothing to lose any sleep over. I'd say it was just a matter of not having much experience. If I were you, though, I'd remember next time around."

The Lieutenant fixed his gaze on the screen, not allowing himself to respond. He was trying to control himself, and he was finding it difficult.

"If I were flying this one," Thomas continued, "I'd pick me some entirely different aiming points. Like here, you selected a cluster of farm buildings. They just don't show up well on the 'scope. What you want to do is take, say, the bend in this river here, or even better, these other buildings

that have metal roofs. A metal roof shows up like a sonofabitch on radar. You just can't hit something that doesn't show up well on the 'scope, it's better to fix on the good, strong returns."

Thomas shut off the machine, and looked at the Lieutenant. There was a long silence. Thomas twirled the dividers in his fingers.

"Tell me something," Thomas asked. "What goes through your mind when you're up there on these bombing runs?"

"What do you mean by *that*?" The Lieutenant said evenly.

"Doesn't the *morality* of all this sometimes hit you right in the gut? I mean, if you consider that we have fifteen aircraft in the wing—each carries a complement of four nuclear weapons, which make a total of 60 hydrogen bombs. Have you ever considered what a vast number of people you could knock off? It would approach billions!"

"Why are you asking?" The Lieutenant was waiting for the Airman to go just *too* far. He wasn't about to get involved in any half-baked moral discussion with an enlisted man.

"I don't know. Just wondered what *I'd* feel if I were in your shoes. I almost ended up in navigator's school myself. Yeah, almost. But I flunked the last test—the one where they'd find out what sort of psyche you had. The questions were like, 'Would you buzz a farmhouse for fun if you were a pilot?' I put down 'yes' on all of them because I figured that's the way you flying types felt. I was wrong, I guess."

The Lieutenant got to his feet. The look on his face was unmistakable. Thomas had once again said the wrong things to the wrong man. The Lieutenant was shaking with poorly-concealed rage. He had sat there for the last half hour listening to the Airman condescendingly enumerating all his navigational errors. That might have been tolerable. But this, this sophomoric moralizing. It was just too much. "That will be about enough from *you*, Airman."

Thomas's face flushed. He rose slowly. "Just trying to make conversation, Lieutenant."

"I said that was *enough*!" The Lieutenant made a slight move toward Thomas.

"Seems to me that you're just uptight because you're a half-assed navigator," Thomas blurted out before he could restrain himself. (He always did things like that when threatened. He felt threatened at this point.)

The Lieutenant could control himself no longer. Impulsively, he seized Thomas by his shirt front and pushed him backwards. His hands were trembling with rage. Thomas responded immediately by shoving back. At that point the door opened, and Captain Lockerman entered the room. Thomas had shoved hard enough to make the Lieutenant lose his balance and fall to the floor. "You *bastard*!" Thomas had just said . . .

Ex-Airman Thomas Greenfield by now was very drunk. He drained what was left in the bottle, and went to the kitchen for another. He sat back at his chair by the window, and stared down at the junk-littered courtyard. He

pretended that he saw the grey-striped cat ambling back to look for mice. "Altitude five-hundred feet," he said aloud. "Proching target. Give me second station!" He bent down to the floor and got a twenty-megaton nuclear beer bottle. "BOMBS AWAY!" he yelled, and tossed the bottle. It arched downward beautifully, and exploded, instantly vaporizing the imagined cat.



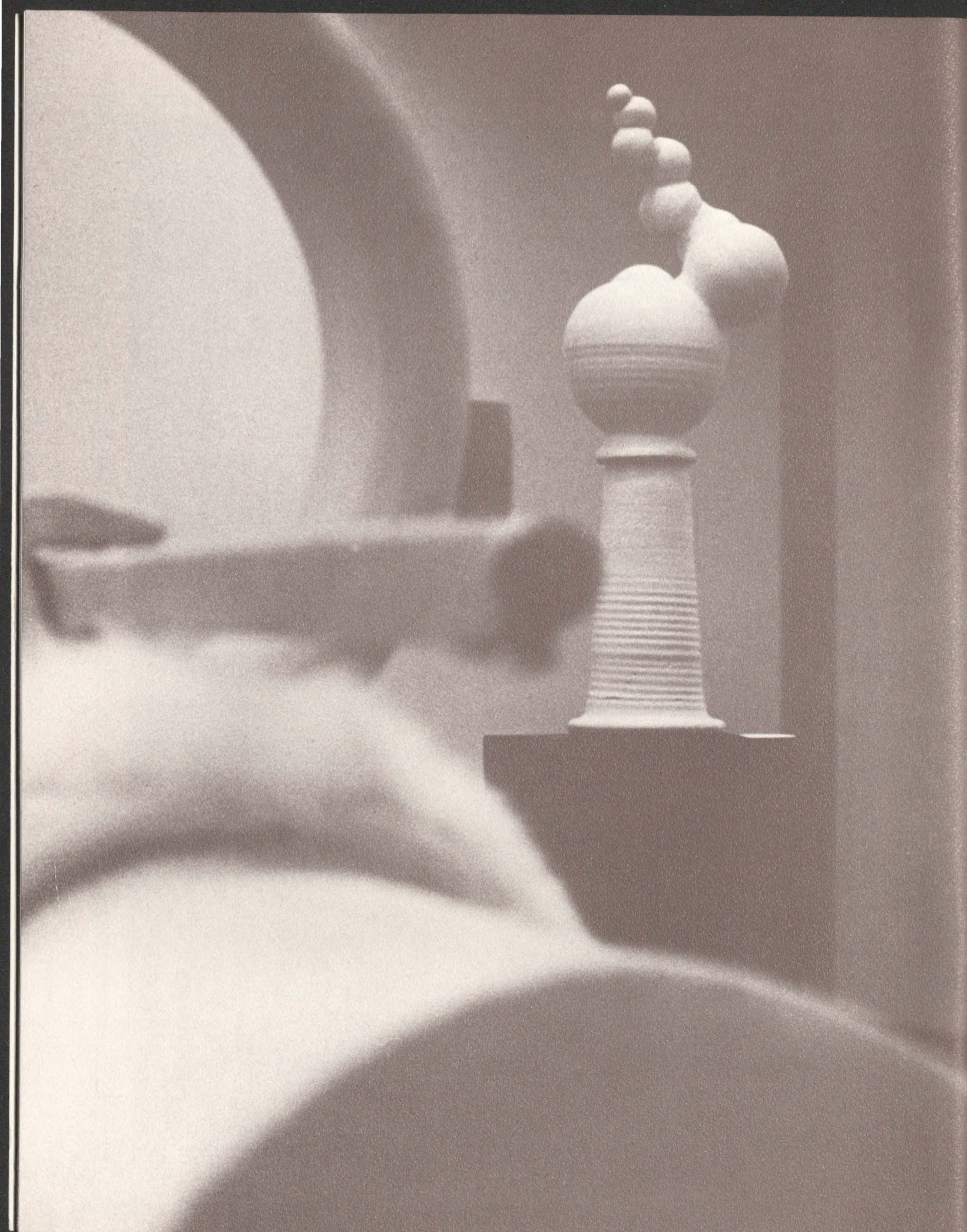
GALLERY

Dean Howell

Genesis 8



Go forth multiply and replenish the earth



Life Bubbles



Vertebra

Where then is the father gone
 Whose leather face bristled
 Upon a downy cheek? And where
 The lonely rages of that man
 Across the table, where he gripped
 The solitary chair and wept
 Because someone had shown him kindness?
 As if that could crack the corporate walls
 And send the secretaries screaming in the halls.

Such questions must be answered
 With the silence of a crowd of voices.

The silence of the hawk,
 Who grips the air in netting spirals,
 Is something different, being,
 As it is, the father's voice: those
 Quiet patterns, warp and woof of time,
 Will cling and lead me thru a labyrinth of sound
 To a nest of silence not up high, but close upon the ground.

The Father's Voice

ROBERT D. CONGER

